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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/30/09

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Yomiuri:
(1) Compensation for murder cases that ran out statute of limitations: Supreme Court hands down decision after right to claim against damage determined
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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, April 29

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2009

07:31

Took a walk around his official residence.

10:19

Left Haneda Airport by government plane for China.

Afternoon

Arrived in Beijing. Held informal talks with international cartoon award winners at the Japan Culture Center in Beijing. Enjoyed an exhibition of photographs. Met Chinese students. Followed by Xiaogang Feng, a Chinese movie director.

Evening

Attended a welcome ceremony at the Great People's Hall. Held talks with Premier Wen.

Night

Attended a dinner party hosted by Wen. Stayed at a hotel.

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4) Poll: 55% unhappy with extra budget; Cabinet support rises 5 points to 29%

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Abridged)
April 30, 2009

The rate of public support for Prime Minister Taro Aso and his cabinet rose 5.9 points from late March to 29.6% in the latest telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey conducted by Kyodo News on April 28-29. The nonsupport rate decreased 7.3 points to 56.2%. In the poll, 65.5% of the respondents answered "yes" when they were asked if they thought Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) President Ichiro Ozawa, whose state-funded secretary has been indicted over illicit political donations from Nishimatsu Construction Co., should resign from his party post. The figure was almost flat from the last poll with a decrease of 1.1 points. The government has presented the Diet with a fiscal 2009 supplementary budget, which is on the largest scale ever, as an economic crisis measure. Asked about this extra budget, a total of 55.0% gave negative answers, broken down into "don't appreciate very much" and "don't appreciate at all."

Meanwhile, in the public's preference of political parties for proportional representation in the next House of Representatives election, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party tallied 30.8%, with the DPJ at 37.9%. The DPJ remained above the LDP. In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the LDP stood at 29.4%, with the DPJ at 29.7%. The DPJ was outstripped by the LDP in the last poll but edged out the DPJ in the poll this time.

CHINA DIPLOMACY

5) Japan-China summit: Aso asks China to nuclear disarm; Wen warns Aso about Yasukuni

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 30, 2009

Katsuhisa Kuramae, Beijing

Prime Minister Taro Aso, who arrived in China on April 29, held talks with Premier Wen Jiabao for about two hours and 20 minutes at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. In their meeting, the two leaders confirmed close cooperation regarding the global economic crisis, swine flu, and the North Korea problem. Prime Minister Aso also requested China's cooperation on nuclear disarmament. Wen, on the other hand, warned Japan on the historical-view issue in the wake of Prime Minister Aso's making an offering to Yasukuni Shrine.

Wen noted that swine flu is becoming a serious global issue, coming on top of the financial crisis. In response, Aso underlined the importance of a calm public response. The leaders agreed to sharing information on border and epidemic prevention measures.

Aso also expressed his expectation of China as the chair of the

Six-Party Talks, describing it as the most pragmatic framework to bring about the denuclearization of North Korea. The North had announced earlier that it would withdraw from the Six-Party Talks. Wen said: "It is important to be persistent in overcoming difficulties." Aso and Wen agreed that the two countries would make utmost efforts to expand domestic demand as a means to overcome the

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economic crisis.

Wen also expressed his concern, saying: "The historical issue is extremely important. In particular, the Yasukuni issue is closely associated with national sentiments. I hope Japan will deal with the matter appropriately." Aso replied that Japan's position has not changed from the view expressed in a landmark 1995 statement in which then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama apologized and expressed remorse for Japan's colonial rule and aggression before and during World War II.

Regarding the nuclear issue, Aso said: "The U.S. Obama administration has taken a stance that is different from that of the previous administration. In order to reduce nuclear weapons, I would like to see China's cooperation." Wen reiterated the past view, saying: "Our country has consistently advocated a total ban on nuclear weapons. Our country has also pledged (to adhere to the principle of) no-first-use of nuclear weapons."

6) Aso, Wen agree to cooperate on swine flu prevention, share need for early resumption of six-party talks

NIKKEI (Top Play) (Full)
April 30, 2009

(Yusuke Nakajima, Beijing)

Prime Minister Taro Aso and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao agreed in a meeting on April 29 in the Great People's Hall in Beijing to work together to prevent the A/H1N1 swine influenza from spreading further. Aso arrived in Beijing the same day for a two-day official visit to China. The two countries will exchange information on the new strain of flue and cooperate in strengthening their respective quarantine systems. Bearing in mind North Korea's announcement that it would carry out more nuclear tests, the two leaders affirmed the need for both countries to jointly make efforts to resume the six-party talks. They also agreed to operate regular flights between Haneda Airport and Beijing in October.

The meeting lasted for about two hours and 20 minutes. Wen said that the outbreaks of swine flu "pose a new obstacle. We want to strengthen cooperation with Japan" in this area. Aso replied: "We would like to exchange information with China on improving quarantine and other efforts." The two countries could consider joint vaccine development.

In discussing North Korea, which has threatened more nuclear tests in reaction to the United Nations Security Council's condemnation of its recent missile launch, Aso and Wen shared the view that the situation should be dealt with in a cool-headed manner. Aso said: "The six-party talks are a practical framework. We expect China, as the chair of the talks, to play its key role," urging China to try to persuade North Korea to return to the talks. We replied: "Persistent efforts are vital. We would like to deepen our cooperation with Japan."

Regarding economic cooperation, the two agreed to operate regular flights between Haneda Airport and Beijing in October. Such service was operated temporarily during the Beijing Olympics last summer. Japan Airlines Co. and All Nippon Airways Co. will swiftly start preparations. Further, Aso and Wen decided to hold the second round of the ministerial-level Japan-China High-Level Economic Talks in

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Tokyo on June 7, which have not been held since their first meeting in December 2007. They also agreed on technical cooperation in the

telecommunications area, including the joint development of the next-generation cellular phone.

Also on the agenda was the environment issue. Aso proposed a Japan-China comprehensive cooperation plan on environmental protection and energy conservation. The two countries will advance joint research on energy-saving at coal thermal power plants and reduction in the effect of loess.

In reference to Aso's sending of an offering to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on the occasion of the spring festival this year, Wen said: "The history issue, particularly the Yasukuni issue, is very sensitive, affecting the people's feelings. I hope Japan will appropriately deal with the issue." Aso said: "Japan will move forward while looking squarely at our history, as expressed in the prime ministerial statements issued in 1995 and 2005. That is Japan's major spirit. Japan's position has not changed."

The two leaders then moved on to nuclear disarmament. In response to Aso's request for China's cooperation, Wen said: "We have promised not to launch any nuclear preemptive attack and are willing to support nuclear disarmament efforts." On the issues of gas field development in the East China Sea and poisoned dumplings made in China, no major progress was made.

Major contents in the Aso-Wen meeting

(North Korea issues)

Q Cooperate to resume the six-party talks.

(New strain of flu)

Q Cooperate on prevention of the flu epidemic from spreading further, disclosure of both sides' information, and speedy quarantine.

(Economic cooperation)

Q Hold the next round of the bilateral high-level economic dialogue in Japan on June 7.

Q Operate regular chartered flights between Haneda and Beijing.

(Industrial cooperation)

Q Promote technical cooperation in developing the next-generation cellular phone.

(Environmental cooperation)

Q Implement a comprehensive plan for technical cooperation on energy conservation

(Historical view, Yasukuni issue)

Q Wen asked Japan to appropriately deal with the issue, while Aso said that Japan has not changed from the view expressed in Murayama and another prime ministerial statements.

7) Gist of Japan-China summit

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)

April 30, 2009

(North Korean issue)

Prime Minister Taro Aso: The UN Security Council was able to issue a

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presidential statement with good contents owing to close cooperation with the Chinese government. North Korea is reacting strongly to it, but it is important to deal with the country in a constrained manner without overreacting.

Premier Wen Jiabao: It is essential for every country concerned to maintain a calm stance from a broad perspective. Although twists and turns seem to lie ahead for the Six-Party Talks, it is important to overcome the difficulties by being persistent and having confidence.

(New strain of influenza)

Wen: There has been no case of infection in China or in Japan. Even

so, we place high priority on prevention. I would like to see China and Japan cooperate to deal with the matter.

Aso: A calm public response is essential. We will endeavor to swiftly disclose and transmit information and will tighten the quarantine system. We want to cooperate with China in information exchange and preventive measures.

(Japan-China relations)

Aso: Japan and China should nurture a strategic mutually-beneficial relationship from a broad perspective.

Wen: Political mutual trust is vital for the development of relations. The two countries must make efforts.

(History issue)

Wen: The history issue is extremely sensitive. In particular, the Yasukuni issue is associated with national sentiments, so I would like to see Japan deal with the matter appropriately.

Aso: There has been no change in Japan's position of squarely facing history and looking toward the future.

(Food safety)

Aso: I strongly hope for an early full account of the pesticide-tainted dumplings case.

Wen: We want to settle the matter at the earliest possible time by strengthening cooperation between the authorities of China and Japan.

(Gas fields in East China Sea)

Aso: It is important to begin working-level talks early. I would like to see China display leadership in dealing with the matter.

Wen: We want to continue trying to improve communications at the administrative-level.

(Nuclear disarmament)

Aso: The Obama administration's responses have been different from those of past U.S. administrations. In order also to reduce nuclear weapons, I would like to see China's cooperation.

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Wen: China actively supports the nuclear arms reduction initiative.

8) China to introduce IT information disclosure system in May next year

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Excerpt)
April 30, 2009

Tetsushi Takahashi, Beijing

The Chinese government announced on April 29 that it would introduce in May 2010 a new system to force foreign manufacturers to disclose security-related data about their information-technology (IT) products procured by the government. The governments of Japan, the U.S., and European countries have strongly urged China to abandon the idea, claiming that foreign companies' intellectual property will be infringed. Although China has said that the application of this requirement will be limited to products procured by the government, the new system will inevitably have a negative effect on businesses of companies of Japan, the U.S. and European countries.

NORTH KOREA PROBLEM

9) U.S. State Department deputy spokesman: U.S. will never forget Japanese abductees and their families

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Keiichi Honma, Washington

Referring in a press briefing yesterday to the fact that U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth met on April 27 with relatives of Japanese abducted by North Korea, including Shigeo Iizuka, representative of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesman Robert Wood said: "We have not forgotten and we will never forget the suffering of the abductees and their families." Wood indicated that the Obama administration would do its best to resolve the abduction issue.

Wood also revealed that Bosworth and other U.S. officials met on April 27 with North Korean defectors.

10) North Korea presses the U.S. for resumption of talks; Hardliners have strong voice

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
April 30, 2009

North Korea has released a statement referring to the possibility of conducting a nuclear test or test-firing an intercontinental ballistic missile, fostering a sense of crisis. The North is apparently is trying to push the U.S. Obama administration toward the negotiating table by applying pressure on it by playing up its nuclear arsenals capable of attacking the continental United States. In North Korea, hardliners seem to have a strong voice as the National Defense Commission has seized more power. In the event of a delay in a U.S. response, there is a high likelihood that the North will act out its statement.

The North reacted strongly to the adoption of a UN Security Council

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presidential statement. On April 14, the North declared that it would withdraw from the Six-Party Talks and that it would also resume reprocessing spent nuclear rods. And on April 25, the country announced that it started reprocessing fuel rods. But because the United States did not demonstrate a posture for dialogue, the North apparently decided to increase tensions.

According to a diplomatic source in Beijing, the North has been making preparations for another nuclear test since its test in October 2006. "There is a need to check the part that failed in the previous test," the source said. The North launched a ballistic missile under the name of a satellite on April 5. The prevailing view is that the missile failed to separate its third stage. "It is necessary to conduct another test in order to check confirm the missile's performance," the source said.

There is an observation that the National Defense Commission was empowered by the Supreme People's Assembly on April 9 and that a new socialist system has been established by the council which now sits above the Korean Workers Party.

11) New Zealand prime minister in meeting with Foreign Minister Nakasone expresses concern about decreasing Japanese tourists

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Wellington, Tetsu Okazaki

Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone met on April 29 in Wellington with New Zealand Prime Minister John Phillip Key. In New Zealand, it has been confirmed that 45 people are infected or are assumed to have caught the new-type influenza. Key, who concurrently serves as tourism minister, expressed concern about the cancellations of travel to his country by Japanese people. The prime minister stressed: "Since we have taken every possible measure to prevent the spread of infection, our country is safe."

12) New flu strain attenuated in virulence: Not foreseen in government program

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)
April 30, 2009

A comment has been made that the new flu strain (swine flu), which has broken out in Mexico, is attenuating in its virulence. However, the infection is continuing to spread. Following the World Health Organization (WHO) raising the alert level to Phase 4, attaching importance to the possibility of the outbreak escalating into a pandemic, Japan has set an action program into motion. The government program envisages a situation in which highly virulent bird flu mutates into a new flu that causes human-to-human transmission. Is it necessary to revise the action program?

Experts call for flexible responses

The government's Action Program for Countermeasures against New Flu Strain, adopted in February 2009, sets five standards governing alert phases for new influenza strains and stipulates measures to be taken by the central government and prefectures accordingly. At present, Japan's alert level is phase 1, meaning a new flu strain outbreak abroad. The alert level will be raised to phase 2, if

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domestic infection is confirmed, meaning an early stage of domestic outbreak. At this stage, measures, such as forced hospitalization of patients, limits to the movements of residents in the affected area and school closures, will be taken.

Mitsuo Kaku, Tohoku University professor of infection control, said: "Taking measures assuming highly virulent virus could inflame social anxieties, if the virulence was attenuated. It is no mistake to prepare for the worst. However, practical measures need to be taken in a flexible manner."

The WHO incorporated in its guidelines for countermeasures against influenza, revised this month, a stance that measures should be taken, while giving consideration to multiple factors, such as mortality rates and an economic impact, as well as to the degree of the spread of the flu. The U.S. in 2007 mapped out standards of five alert phases, according to the seriousness of the spread, infection rates and the number of deaths and mortality rates. The federal and local governments are to adopt measures according to the guidelines.

Hitoshi Oshitani, a professor of virus at Tohoku University, pointed out, "It is probably only a matter of time before infection is confirmed in Japan. In order to prepare for an outbreak in the nation, it is necessary to sort out measures that can be adopted as is and those that cannot be done so and revise improper ones."

Oshitani warned against optimism, saying, "Mortality rates could serve as one yardstick. However, whether it is really so has not been at the present stage. Even if such a rate is 0.2%, if 10 million people are infected, 20,000 people would die. This is no small figure."

The Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry New Flu Strain Measures Promotion Headquarters said that they will consider with reference to experts' opinions, once a certain level of assessment regarding the virulence of the virus was released.

DEFENSE AND SECURITY AFFAIRS

13) U.S. force realignment in a flexible way: Gregson

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Satoshi Ogawa, Washington

The Senate Armed Services Committee held a confirmation hearing on April 28 to examine the nomination of Wallace Gregson, former commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Bases in Japan, to be assistant

secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs. The hearing included the issue of realigning U.S. forces in Japan. "We need to reexamine the progress at all times and to work together with Tokyo to solve bilateral issues," Gregson stated in written form to the committee over the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. The former administration only sought to carry out the roadmap for realignment implementation in a steady way. However, Gregson implied taking an even more flexible stance.

Gregson, referring to U.S. allies' contributions to Afghanistan, stated that Japan is making a considerable fiscal contribution, including 1 billion dollars in aid to Pakistan. "I will continue to

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make efforts to ask friends and allies to increase their contributions in their best areas of specialty," Gregson added.

14) Defense Minister Hamada off to U.S. today

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
April 30, 2009

Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada will leave today for the United States. He is expected to meet with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates on May 1 in Washington. This will be the first time in a year and nine months since a Japanese defense minister has visited the U.S. Defense Minister Yuriko Koike went last in August 2007.

A meeting of the defense chiefs of Japan and the U.S. will take place for the first time in a year since Shigeru Ishiba and Gates held talks in May 2008 in Singapore. The Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2-plus-2), which also includes Japanese foreign minister and U.S. secretary of state, has not met for two years.

In the past, the meeting between Japanese and U.S. defense chiefs, including 2-plus-2 conferences, often took place, for example, three times in 2005, five times in 2006, and four times in 2007. In 2008, there was only one defense meeting, which is too few even though last year was the year of U.S. presidency campaign.

This suggests that the disarray in the Defense Ministry caused by the arrest in November 2007 of former Administrative Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya had an impact on defense cooperation between Japan and the United States.

In the meeting on May 1, Hamada and Gates will confirm the Japan-U.S. agreement (road map) on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, which the two countries aim to complete in 2014, and discuss how to strengthen cooperation on such issues as a missile defense (MD) system. The two defense chiefs will also discuss coordination between Japan's National Defense Program Outline, which will be revised late this year, and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which the United States will implement 2010.

15) Collective defense coming up again

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)
April 30, 2009

There are rising arguments again from within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party by lawmakers who insist that Japan should be allowed to participate in collective self-defense. It is currently prohibited under the government's constitutional interpretation. The LDP's 'hawkish' lawmakers are advocating collective self-defense in the wake of North Korea's recent launch of a ballistic missile. They apparently want to reignite constitutional reinterpretation that has been mothballed since the Fukuda cabinet.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who tackled the issue of collective self-defense when he was in office, is the key advocate. Abe, when he was prime minister, set up an advisory panel to discuss how to rebuild Japan's legal base for its national security. Former Ambassador to the United States Shunji Yanai, who presided over the advisory panel, met with Prime Minister Taro Aso on April 23 and explained the panel's conclusion, which took the position that

Constitution Article 9 should be interpreted as not prohibiting Japan from exercising its right to collective self-defense. That evening, Abe himself suggested that the LDP's manifesto incorporate constitutional reinterpretation.

However, if the Aso cabinet sets about this issue, neighboring countries are likely to react negatively. It would adversely impact on Japan's cooperation with China and South Korea on the North Korea problem. The LDP still remembers losing the 2007 House of Councillors election.

ZUMWALT